

Message Text

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ACTION EA-12

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INFO AMCONSUL HONG KONG PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY TAIPEI

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CINCPAC HONOLULU HI

C O N F I D E N T I A L PEKING 0068

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT CH

SUBJ: SECOND ANNIVERSARY OF PREMIER CHOU'S DEATH: A FEW WREATHS, A
NEW NAME FOR A LOCOMOTIVE

1. SUMMARY. IN MARKED CONTRAST TO THE MASSIVE WREATHS-AND-POSTERS IN
COMMEMORATION OF PREMIER CHOU'S FIRST DEATH ANNIVERSARY LAST
JANUARY, THE SCENE AT TIEN AN MEN THIS YEAR HAS BEEN PLACID.
THE SECOND ANNIVERSARY OF CHOU'S PASSING HAS BEEN OBSERVED
WITH A FEW SCORE WREATHS, INSCRIPTIONS, POEMS AND SMALL
CHARACTER POSTERS AROUND THE MARTYR'S MONUMENT IN TIEN AN MEN
SQUARE. FEW SEEM POLITICALLY SIGNIFICANT. ON THE OFFICIAL
LEVEL, A LOCOMOTIVE HAS BEEN CHRISTENED THE "CHOU EN-LAI
LOCOMOTIVE" BY DECISION OF THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS. A NAMING
CEREMONY WAS HELD IN SHANGHAI, WHERE THE LOCOMOTIVE IS BASED,
AND CHAIRMAN HUA KUO-FENG HAS CONTRIBUTED THE INSCRIPTION TO THE
LOCOMOTIVE. END SUMMARY.

2. IN STRIKING CONTRAST TO THE SCENE ONE YEAR AGO,
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OBSERVANCES OF THE SECOND ANNIVERSARY OF CHOU EN-LAI'S
PASSING HAVE BEEN LARGELY CONFINED TO THE OFFICIAL LEVEL
AND TO ACTIVITIES WITHIN UNITS. ALTHOUGH NOT EXPLICITLY
RELATED TO THE ANNIVERSARY, A CHRISTENING CEREMONY FOR
THE NEWLY-NAMED "CHOU EN-LAI LOCOMOTIVE" WAS HELD IN
SHANGHAI ON JANUARY 6. JANUARY 7 PAPERS FEATURE A
PHOTOGRAPH OF THE LOCOMOTIVE (WHICH LIKE THE "MAO

TSE-TUNG LOCOMOTIVE" AND THE "CHU TEH" LOCOMOTIVE" HAS A LARGE PORTRAIT OF THE CP PERSON IT HONORS) AND POLITBURO MEMBER AND SHANGHAI FIRST PARTY SECRETARY SU CHEN -HUA PRESIDING OVER THE RIBBON-CUTTING CEREMONY. NEWSPAPERS ON BOTH JANUARY 7 AND JANUARY 8 DEVOTE MOST OF PAGE ONE TO THE EVENT.

3. CHAIRMAN HUA KUO-FENG'S CALLIGRAPHY IDENTIFIES THE LOCOMOTIVE AND CHAIRMAN HUA'S DECISION APPROVED THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS PROPOSAL TO NAME THE LOCOMOTIVE AFTER PREMIER CHOU. HUA AND HIS SUPPORTERS NO DOUBT CALCULATE THAT SOME POLITICAL MILEAGE MAY BE GAINED BY LINKAGE OF HUA'S NAME WITH THAT OF CHOU ON THE SECOND ANNIVERSARY OF THE "BELOVED AND RESPECTED" PREMIER'S PASSING.

4. AT TIEN AN MEN SQUARE, RESIDENTS OF PEKING HAVE AGAIN PRESENTED WREATHS, PENNED INSCRIPTIONS, AND PASTED UP POEMS AND ESSAYS -- BUT ON A FAR SMALLER SCALE THAN LAST YEAR. IN CONTRAST TO THE THOUSANDS OF PAPER WREATHS AND HUNDREDS OF POSTERS WHICH LAST YEAR FILLED TIEN AN MEN SQUARE FROM THE FORBIDDEN CITY TO THE FENCE AROUND THE MAO MAUSOLEUM WORK SITE, ALL ACTIVITY THIS YEAR HAS BEEN CONFINED TO THE MARTYR'S MONUMENT AND ITS BASE. ONLY ABOUT 75 WREATHS DRIBBLED IN BETWEEN DUSK ON JANUARY 7 AND MIDNIGHT ON JANUARY 8 (THE END OF THE ANNIVERSARY);
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OATH-TAKING CEREMONIES WERE FEW -- THE WREATHS WERE SIMPLY PLUNKED DOWN; A HANDFUL OF PERSONS SPORTED CHOU EN-LAI BUTTONS SAVED FROM LAST YEAR; AND THE SMALL CHARACTER POSTERS AND OTHER LITERARY EFFORTS WERE BUT A PALE IMITATION OF LAST YEAR'S. THE MAIN SIMILARITY, PERHAPS, WAS THE BITING OLD JANUARY WIND. WITHOUT A SENSE OF POLITICAL DRAMA TO DRAW OUT THE CURIOUS, ONLY THE HARDY AND THE GENUINELY REVERENT CHOSE TO BRAVE THE ELEMENTS.

5. ONLY THREE ESSAYS SEEMED TO CARRY ANY POLITICAL MESSAGE:
--A POSTER DATED JANUARY 9, 1977 (SAVED AND REPOSTED) WHICH ASKED WHY NO CHOU EN-LAI MEMORIAL HALL HAD YET BEEN CONSTRUCTED;
--A SMALL-CHARACTER POSTER ON THE NORTHEAST FACE OF THE CENOTAPH ATTACKING (WITHOUT AMPLIFICATION) "OPPORTUNISTS";
--A SMALL-CHARACTER POSTER, POSSIBLY WRITTEN BY A SYMPATHIZER WITH THE LEFT, WHICH ATTACKED KRUSCHEV. (THE KRUSHCHEV ANALOGY HAD BEEN EMPLOYED IN LATE 1976 BY LEFTIST SUPPORTERS TO ATTACK HUA KUO-FENG.)

6. ASKED TO EXPLAIN THE DISPARITY BETWEEN 1977 AND 1978 OBSERVANCES AT TIEN AN MEN FOR PREMIER CHOU, A PEKING

TAXI DRIVER SAID THAT THE COUNTRY HAD RETURNED TO
NORMALCY, THAT 1977 HAD BEEN THE FIRST OPPORTUNITY
TO DISPLAY RESPECT PUBLICLY FOR CHOU, AND THAT SUCH
RESPECT WAS BEING SHOWN THIS YEAR WITHIN WORK UNITS,
WHICH WERE SPONSORING PLAYS, READINGS, AND THE LIKE.
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